

# **The One Way In Sutra**

**Translated by Dharmanandi from Sanskrit into Chinese and by Thich Nhat Hanh and Annabel Laity into English.**

## **Section One**

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was staying in the Jeta Grove in the town of Sravasti. The Lord addressed the assembly of monks:

"There is a way to practice which purifies the actions of living beings, eradicates all sorrow, anxiety, and the roots of afflictions, and leads to the highest understanding and the realization of Nirvana. It is a path, which destroys the Five Obstacles. It is the path of the Four Ways of Stopping and Concentrating the Mind. Why is it called "the one way in"? Because it is the way to the oneness of mind. Why is it called a way? Because it is the Noble Eightfold Path, the way of right view, right contemplation, right action, right livelihood, right practice, right speech, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This explains the expression "the one way in."

"What then are the Five Obstacles? They are attachment, aversion, agitation, torpor, and doubt. These are the obstacles, which need to be removed.

"What are the Four Ways of Stopping and Concentrating the Mind? The practitioner meditates on the inside of the body in the inside of the body to end unwholesome thoughts and remove anxiety, and he meditates on the outside of the body in the outside of the body to end unwholesome thoughts and remove anxiety. The practitioner meditates on the feelings in the feelings from the inside and the feelings in the feelings from the outside in order to be at peace and have joy, and he meditates on the feelings in the feelings from both inside and outside in order to be at peace and have joy. The practitioner meditates on the mind in the mind from the inside, and he meditates on the mind in the mind from the outside in order to be at peace and have joy, and he meditates on the mind in the mind from both inside and outside in order to be at peace and have joy. The practitioner meditates on the objects of mind in the objects of mind from the inside, and he meditates on the objects of mind in the objects of mind from the outside in order to be at peace and have joy, and he meditates on the objects of mind in the objects of mind from both the inside and the outside in order to be at peace and have joy.

## **Section Two**

"How does the practitioner meditate on the body from the inside so as to realize peace and joy in himself?

"In this case, the practitioner meditates on the body as a body and according to its functions. When he examines it from head to toes or from toes to head, he sees that it is composed of impure constituents, and he is unable to be attached to it. He observes that this body has hair of the head and hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, sweat, pus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, heart, liver, spleen, kidneys. He observes and recognizes urine, excrement, tears, saliva, blood vessels, grease, and observing and knowing them all, he is unattached and regrets nothing. This is the way the practitioner observes the body in order to realize peace and joy and be able to end unwholesome thoughts and remove anxiety and sorrow.

"Further the practitioner meditates on this body in order to see the Four Elements of earth, water, fire, and air, and he distinguishes these Four Elements. Just like a skillful butcher or his apprentice might lay out the different parts of a slaughtered cow and distinguish the leg, heart, torso, and head, the practitioner observing his own body distinguishes the Four Elements just as clearly, seeing that this is earth, this is water, this is fire, and this is air. Thus the practitioner meditates on the body in the body in order to end attachment.

"Further, Bhikkhus, one should observe this body as having many openings from which many impure substances flow. Just as we look at bamboo or reeds and see the joints in the canes, so the practitioner observes the body with many openings from which impure substances flow.

"Further, Bhikkhus, the practitioner meditates this corpse being spread out and peeked at by vultures, being discovered and gnawed at by all sorts of wild creatures like tigers, panthers, and wolves, and then comes back to observing his own body and sees that it is no different. 'This very body of mine will not be able to escape that condition.' This is how the practitioner meditates on the body to realize peace and joy.

"Further, Bhikkhus, the practitioner visualizes a corpse, which has lain on the ground for a year. It is half-eaten, fetid, and impure. Then he comes back to meditating on his own body and sees that his own body is no different. 'This very body of mine will not be able to escape that condition.' This is how the practitioner meditates on the body.

"Further, Bhikkhus, the practitioner visualizes the corpse from which the skin and flesh has shriveled away. All that is left are the bones stained with blood. Then he comes back to meditating on his own body and sees that his own body is no different. 'This very body of mine will not be able to escape that condition.' This is how the practitioner meditates on the body.

"Further, Bhikkhus, the practitioner visualizes a skeleton, which is just bones held together by some ligaments. Then he comes back to meditating on his own body and sees that his own body is no different. 'This very body of mine will not be able to escape that condition.' This is how the practitioner meditates on the body.

"Further, Bhikkhus, the practitioner visualizes a corpse which has become a collection of scattered bones, all in different places: the hand bone, leg bone, ribs, shoulder blades, spinal column, knee cap, and skull. Then he comes back to meditating on his own body and sees that his own body is no different. 'This very body of mine will not be able to escape that condition.' His body will also decay in that way. This is how the practitioner meditates on the body in order to realize peace and joy.

"Further, Bhikkhus, the practitioner visualizes a corpse which has become a collection of bones bleached like shells. Then he comes back to meditating on his own body and sees that his own body is no different. 'This very body of mine will not be able to escape that condition.' His body will also decay in that way. This is how the practitioner meditates on the body.

"Further, Bhikkhus, the practitioner visualizes a corpse which has become a collection of yellowing bones, to which there is nothing worth being attached, or bones that have become the color of ash and are no longer distinguishable from the earth. Thus the practitioner meditates on his own body, abandoning unwholesome thoughts and removing sorrow and anxiety, observing, 'This body is impermanent, it is something which decomposes.' A practitioner who observes himself like this outside the body and inside the body and outside and inside the body together understands that there is nothing, which is eternal.

## **Section Three**

"How does the practitioner meditate on the feelings in the feelings?

"When the practitioner has a pleasant feeling, he knows that he has a pleasant feeling. When he has a painful feeling, he knows that he has a painful feeling. When his feelings are neutral, he knows that his feelings are neutral. When he has a pleasant, painful, or neutral feeling with a material basis, he knows that he has a pleasant, painful, or neutral feeling with a material basis. When he has a pleasant, painful, or neutral feeling with a non-material basis, he knows he has a pleasant, painful, or neutral feeling with a non-material basis. This is how the practitioner meditates on the feelings in the feelings by his own insight.

"Further, Bhikkhus, when the practitioner has a pleasant feeling, then there is not a painful feeling, and the practitioner knows there is a pleasant feeling. When there is a painful feeling, then there is not a pleasant feeling, and the practitioner knows that there is a painful feeling. When there is a neutral feeling, then there is neither a pleasant feeling nor a painful feeling, and the practitioner is aware that the feeling is neither pleasant nor painful. The practitioner is aware of the arising of all dharmas and the disappearance of all dharmas in such a way that, by his own insight, he realizes peace and joy. As feelings arise, the practitioner recognizes and is aware of them and their roots, and he is not dependent on them and does not give rise to feelings of attachment to the world. At that time there is no fear, and having no fear, he liberates himself forever from illusion and realizes Nirvana. Birth and death are no longer. The holy life has been lived. What needs

to be done has been done. There will be no more rebirth. He understands this directly. This is how the practitioner is aware of the feelings in the feelings to end dispersed thinking and remove sorrow and anxiety. Such is the meditation on the inside of the feelings and the outside of the feelings.

## **Section Four**

"What is meant by meditating on the mind in the mind in order to realize peace and joy?

"When the practitioner has desire in his mind, he knows that he has desire in his mind. When he does not have desire, he knows that he does not have desire. When he has hatred in his mind, he knows that he has hatred in his mind. When he does not have hatred, he knows that he does not have hatred. When he has confusion in his mind, he knows that he has confusion in his mind. When he does not have confusion, he knows that he does not have confusion. When he has craving in his mind, he knows that he has craving in his mind. When he does not have craving, he knows that he does not have craving. When there is mastery of his mind, he knows that there is mastery of his mind. When there is no mastery, he knows there is no mastery. When there is dispersion, he knows that there is dispersion. When there is no dispersion, he knows that there is no dispersion. When there is inattention, he knows that there is inattention. When there is no inattention, he knows that there is no inattention. When there is universality, he knows that there is universality. When there is no universality, he knows that there is no universality. When there is extensiveness, he knows that there is extensiveness. When there is not extensiveness, he knows that there is not extensiveness. When there is boundlessness, he knows that there is boundlessness. When there is not boundlessness, he knows that there is not boundlessness. When there is concentration, he knows that there is concentration. When there is no concentration, he knows that there is no concentration. When he has not yet realized liberation, he knows that he has not yet realized liberation. When he has realized liberation, he knows that he has realized liberation.

"This is how the practitioner is mindful of the mind in the mind, He observes the arising of dharmas, observes the destruction of dharmas, or observes both the arising and destruction of dharmas; being mindful of dharmas in order to realize peace and joy. He is able to see, know, and observe what is not observable without becoming dependent on the object and without giving rise to worldly thoughts, Because there are no thoughts of attachment to the world, there is no fear. Because there is no fear, there is no residue of affliction. When there is no residue of affliction, Nirvana arises, and birth and death are no more, the holy life is realized, what needs to be done has been done, and there will be no more rebirth. All this the practitioner knows to be true. Thus in his own person the practitioner observes mind in mind, on the inside and on the outside, in order to remove uncontrolled thought and cut off all anxiety.

## **Section Five**

"What is meant by 'meditating on the objects of mind in the objects of mind'?

"When the practitioner practices the first factor of awakening, mindfulness, it is in reliance on the initial application of thought, on no-craving, on destroying the unwholesome mind and abandoning the unwholesome dhammas. He practices the factors of awakening, investigation of dhammas, energy, joy, concentration, and letting go, in reliance on applied thought, in reliance on no-craving, in reliance on destroying the unwholesome dhammas. This is how he practices meditating on the objects of mind in the objects of mind.

"Further, Bhikkhus, having been liberated from sensual attachment, having abandoned unwholesome dhammas, with initial application of thought and sustained thought, with joy, he delights to dwell in the first Dhyana in order to have joy in his own person. This is how the practitioner meditates on the objects of mind in the objects of mind.

"Further, Bhikkhus, with the passing of applied thought and sustained thought, a joy arises in his mind which leads to the oneness of mind. When there is no more initial application of thought and sustained thought, the practitioner, maintaining joy, enters the second Dhyana, which has peace as well as joy. This is how the practitioner meditates on the objects of mind in the objects of mind.

"Further, Bhikkhus, with the passing of thought and the constant practice of letting go of applied thought, he enjoys for himself that state which the holy ones long for, where mindfulness in letting go is fully purified, and he enters the third Dhyana, This is how the practitioner meditates on the objects of mind in the objects of mind.

"Further, Bhikkhus, with the absence of joy, when anxiety about joy and elation as well as pleasure and pain are no longer, and his mindfulness in letting go is fully purified, he enters the fourth Dhyana, and that is to meditate on the objects of mind in the objects of mind. He meditates on the arising of dhammas and the passing of dhammas in order to arrive at peace and joy. He realizes right mindfulness in the present moment. He is able to see, know, and abandon dispersion. He is no longer dependent on anything. He does not give rise to thoughts of the world. Because he does not have worldly thoughts, he is not afraid. When there is no fear, birth and death no longer exist, and the holy life has been accomplished, what needs to be done has been done, there is no more rebirth, and everything is known in its true nature.

## **Section Six**

"Bhikkhus, relying on this one way of entering the path, living beings are purified, freed from sorrow and anxiety, their minds no longer subject to agitation, their understanding stable, and they are able to realize Nirvana. This one way in is the destruction of the Five Hindrances and practice of the Four Ways of Stopping and Concentrating the Mind. The Bhikkhus, who heard the Buddha teach thus, applied themselves joyfully at that time to the practice.